

## **Subject: Praying for a peaceful and blessed 2008**

Today we are entering the last phase of the Christmas program and flood relief, up in Erode. This area still shows the effect of heavy rains from October through that last big rain December 18th-23rd. Lots of people lost their huts and many others have damaged walls and shredded roofs.

The Mission church members, elders and evangelists have worked steadily through the rains and at an accelerated pace once the rains stopped. The whole staff pitched in to get the Bibles, rice and blankets to the places where the suffering was judged the worst and to the people who were suffering most.

By the time we finish, January 7th, the South India Church of Christ Mission will have distributed 5,000 bags of rice weighing 5 kg (11 pounds) each, plus 5,000 blankets and Bibles. This means the Mission was able to move 55,000 pounds of rice plus the bulk of the Bibles, New Testaments, and blankets to 225 villages and slums throughout Tamil Nadu and in Idukki District. It is too early to know how many lives were saved or souls drawn to Jesus, but we do know that Jesus was visibly with His people through the work the Mission was able to do.

For all this, we praise Jesus for His love for all human beings, no matter how poor or suffering. Were it not for God's grace and the moving of the Holy Spirit, what a harsh and cruel world we would live in! I don't know how to communicate the look on the faces of elderly couples squatting in the mud sheltered only by a few remaining palm leaves, hungry and abandoned as the water isolated hut from hut. Or of children pulling the blankets around themselves, warm at last, while their parents light a smoky fire to heat the water for cooking the rice. The wood is smoky because wet, and it is hard to light a fire with wet wood. But each time, somehow it is done and hope is reborn.

In the cold of the winter in America and the warmth of families together for the holidays, this may all seem far away. But because some people in America cared enough to think of their brothers and sisters so far away, Jesus was in the mud and the flood water, ministering to the weakest and the poorest. We thank each of the prayer partners who thought of the suffering here in South India, each of the churches that supported the Christmas program and the flood relief, and IDES, who gave critical support at what turned out to be the worst time, just before the last big rains.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow. And we pray for a peaceful and blessed 2008, even though surrounded by so much fear and evil thoughts. We need Jesus to be with us now more than ever, as signs of a second wave of persecution persist. I'll send you some updates on this in a later email as we are watching carefully what looks to be a repeat of 1999, with the RSS testing its ability to carry out a full persecution of Christ's church in India. But for now, we celebrate the birth of the Christ's child and the beginning of 2008.

David

